

**Bureau of Land Management**  
Northwest California Resource Advisory Council

Business Meeting  
Friday, Feb. 10, 2012  
Redding, California

**Summary Minutes**

Chairman Michael Kelley convened the meeting at 1 p.m.

Attending

Category one: Eric Lueder, Stan Leach, Dennis Possehn. Absent: Bob Warren

Category Two: Rondal Snodgrass, Ryan Henson, Bob Schneider, Michael Kelley

Category Three: Tony Shaw, Kendall Smith, Shirley Laos, Julie Rogers.

*There is a quorum*

**Opening Business**

**Approvals:** The agenda was approved as mailed with addition of a presentation on the proposed Berryessa-Snow Mountain National Conservation Area. The minutes from the last meeting were approved with no changes.

**Election of Officers:** The RAC selected Michael Kelley to continue as chair and Ryan Henson to continue as vice chair.

**Project Updates (information)**

**Walker Ridge Wind Energy:** Ukiah Field Manager Rich Burns reported that Alta Gas requested a delay in release of the EIS for its proposed wind energy development to have more time to perfect the Plan of Development. A new project manager will be hired in four to six weeks and the company announced it will re-engage on the project. Rich said the company has received an extension of a right of way to allow bird studies and other research to continue. Scientific studies, owned by AltaGas, will be released when the EIS process begins. Tuleyome had requested release of the documents.

Rich said he expected release of the EIS in mid May, with a 45-day public comment period to begin then.

Bob Schneider suggested that the BLM consider shifting additional resources to the Ukiah Field Office to help with tasks that are not being completed because of the focus on the Walker Ridge project.

There was continuing discussion about the appropriate time and method for the RAC to comment on the Draft EIS.

**Sacramento River Bend:** Jennifer Mata, who reports as the new Redding field manager in March, reported that the staff has restored Coyote Pond and stocked it with fish. A fishing pier was constructed. A similar project is underway at Bass Pond. A partnership with River Partners is seeking state Wildlife Conservation Board funds for restoration work on Bloody Island, also a recent BLM acquisition. The BLM is working with The California Department of Fish and Game on a partnership for improvements at Battle Creek. Two acquisitions are pending and funding is available to close on them. These will be important to block up public holdings. The field office plans to start work on a management plan for the Sacramento River Bend Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) that will include provisions for public involvement.

**Berryessa-Snow Mountain NCA Proposal:** Bob Schneider updated the group on efforts toward Congressional establishment of the national monument. His organization, Tuleyome, is the leading proponent for the designation that would encompass federally managed lands stretching from the Lake Berryessa area on the south to Snow Mountain on the Mendocino National Forest on the north. The organization is working to build support for the Congressional designation.

**Letter of Appreciation:** The RAC approved a letter of appreciation for Steve Anderson, who retired in December as manager of the Redding Field Office.

### **Aquatic Condition Assessment (action)**

Karl Stein, natural resources specialist from the California State Office, presented information on a pilot program to provide managers with broad scale analysis of biological, aquatic, and upland habitat conditions. Data collected through this process can tell managers where to focus maximum efforts on species conservation, showing where opportunities for success are highest. The pilot project now underway will validate use of a sample design in assessing conditions. Trout Unlimited is a partner. There is detailed information at <http://www.tu.org/science/conservation-success-index>.

Karl characterized the approach as a strategic look at planning. He said the BLM is using the approach for data monitoring needed for livestock grazing permit renewals and wild horse and burro herd management areas to develop strong and defensible data for these decisions. It is important that quantitative data is repeatable over time and free of the bias associated with qualitative data collection.

Summarizing, he said the process provides broad scale context for local decision making, and sets out a protocol for establishing a quantitative data baseline.

Rondal questioned how various federal agencies looking at the same issues can share this data.

RAC Comments:

- Kendall Smith said the tool seems to be another way for the BLM to engage conservation groups to draw their expertise into the agency for use in decision making.
- Dennis Possehn feared a conflict of interest because of the involvement of Trout Unlimited. He suggested there should be independent reviews to be sure data is not skewed. Karl and Nancy responded that ground truthing and review of data is part of the process.
- Tony Shaw was concerned that other agencies might not recognize this work. He suggested that the BLM work with other agencies to ensure they will recognize the data produced through this work.

*Action: The RAC unanimously agreed to endorse the approach, and requested that BLM seek other state and federal agency support.*

The RAC commended Nancy for her foresight in encouraging this approach. Nancy credited Karl for the project.

**National Landscape Conservation System (information)**

Bob Wick, the NLCS program lead from the California State Office, presented an outline of the National Landscape Conservation System. He described the history behind creation of the system; the types of land designations contained within it, and summarized the BLM's 15-year management strategy. Bob and the field managers described some of the northwest California Units contained in the system.

The system includes:

- 16 National Monuments totaling 4.6 million acres
- 16 National Conservation Areas totaling 3.6 million acres
- 5 similar designations totaling about 430,000 acres. These include designations such as the Headwaters Forest Reserve and the Piedras Blancas outstanding natural area.
- 221 Wilderness Areas totaling about 8.7 million acres
- 545 Wilderness Study Areas totaling about 12.9 million acres.
- 69 Wild and Scenic Rivers totaling about 2,400 miles.

Other highlights:

- The units account for about 10 percent of BLM lands but provide lands for about 35 percent of recreation uses on BLM managed lands.

- It is important to note that multiple uses are allowed on NLCS units, though most have been withdrawn from mineral development.
- The 15-year strategy that focuses on partnerships and connection with the rest of BLM management.

Wick encouraged the RAC members to engage their constituent groups in developing the 15 year strategy. Thoughts can be directed to Bob at [rwick@blm.gov](mailto:rwick@blm.gov).

Ryan noted that the BLM has become the agency of choice for managing these types of lands because the agency does not overly develop them. Bob Schneider credited retired BLM staffer Paul Brink for his leadership in creating the system.

### **Public Comments**

There was no one present to address the council.

### **Propser Ridge Prairie Restoration (action)**

Arcata field Office Botanist Jennifer Wheeler, Fuels Specialist Dan Wooden and Fire Management Officer Tim Jones presented the information about the project set to begin in the King Range.

The project is designed to use a variety of tools including mastication and prescribed fire for to reduce encroaching conifers into prairie habitat. Projects are intended to improve vegetative diversity, maintain good soil conditions, reduce fuel loading to improve fire safety, and reduce the encroachment of Douglas-fir and other woody species.

The biggest problems are encroaching coyote brush and Douglas-fir. The plan includes provisions to involve the community in planning projects, which would be completed in phases.

In addition, the speakers said:

- The project is important to preserve the remnants of California's native vegetation. Only about a quarter of the original native vegetation remains.
- Properly functioning coastal prairies provide high native plant diversity, good wildlife habitat.
- Proposed treatments are brush mastication, prescribed fire and a combination which would involve masticating fire lines and then burning interior areas.
- There have been some concerns voiced by neighboring property owners who are nervous about use of prescribed fire.

- Burns will be conducted during cool, damp periods with opportunities for public observation. Interested members of the public will be welcomed at briefings. Consideration is being given to developing an observation protocol.
- There is a strong local consensus that treatment is needed. A public meeting will be held in Petrolia in two weeks.

Environmental Assessment will be released and open for a 30 day comment period that starts after the scoping meeting in Petrolia.

**RAC Comments:**

- Rondal Snodgrass: Suggested including Triple Junction High school in the project and outreach efforts. Mattole Elementary school could be involved in various ways as well.
- The public presentation should focus on why the BLM is doing the projects rather than a long presentation on phases and process. The phase descriptions need to be simplified. Use more photos to illustrate conditions.
- The BLM should have field trips on the day preceding the meeting. If afterward it should be soon after the meeting presentation.
- The breakout sessions in the public meeting will be a good feature for the local communities.
- Ryan Henson: be careful to explain the jargon and acronyms when making public presentations.
- Michael Kelley: Supports the need for simple messages: prairies are great and prescribed burning on this scale is the best way to achieve healthier prairies. Stress the measures being taken to ensure safety.

*Action: The RAC agreed to support the project and will indicate support in a letter to the BLM. The letter will reference the diverse membership of the RAC and the council's review of the project at today's meeting.*

**Field Managers' Reports**

**RAC members offered comments on the written reports presented:**

## **Ukiah**

Bob Schneider said repairing the Road 40 bridge should be a high priority. It is very important for many users.

## **Arcata**

Rondal Snodgrass wants to see field office reports on their activities that benefit salmonid recovery. There is no time to delay on action. He commended BLM for taking the lead in the Arcata field office.

## **Closing Business**

The next meeting was set for July 26-27. The Ukiah Field Office will host. A field tour will be arranged.

Meeting topics: Lost Coast Headlands EA, Lacks Creek activity plan, joint issues with Mendocino National Forest, forestry practices, discussion on how to work more effectively with the BLM.

*Summary minutes compiled by  
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